Stress Management

Wisconsin Parkinson Association
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Types of Stress

What are the origins of your stress?

- Feeling overwhelmed by the pressure of leading a helpful group session
- Feeling responsible for your group - especially when a member may be declining or struggling to cope
- Overcoming helplessness
- Anxiety about the future
- Others?

Positive vs. negative stress

- Negative stress activates the threat response - lasts longer than:
- Positive stress, which activates the reward response
Stress and the Threat Response

- Limbic system and its use of resources for social-emotional stressors

- When we are exposed to stress, our brain activates the threat response – our Limbic System starts using more oxygen and glucose (Rock, 2009)

So, to cope and help others cope with stress, we need to spot stress in real time

Understand How Stress Impacts You

How do you experience stress?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Symptoms</th>
<th>Emotional Symptoms</th>
<th>Cognitive Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headaches</td>
<td>Irritability</td>
<td>Forgetfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backaches</td>
<td>Angry outbursts</td>
<td>Repetitive thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in appetite</td>
<td>Crying</td>
<td>Rumination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insomnia</td>
<td>Emotional lability</td>
<td>Math/grammar errors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hypersomnia</td>
<td>Withdrawal/isolation from social situations</td>
<td>Lack of concentration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dry mouth</td>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Reduction in interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stiff neck/shoulders</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Lack of attention to detail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>Jealousy</td>
<td>Lower creativity/production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold hands</td>
<td>Critical of self/others</td>
<td>Lower attention span</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gritting teeth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigestion</td>
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We all need to develop (and help our group members develop) a personal plan of stress identification and management.
Managing Stress

The Four “F’s”

- **Fitness**
  - Find exercise that is enjoyable and realistic (4-5x/week for 30 minutes)

- **Food**
  - What to eat, when to eat it, how often you eat it

- **Fun**
  - Take mental breaks for fun or laughs when possible
  - Find what you enjoy and prioritize time for that

- **Forty Winks**
  - 7-9 hours for most
  - If you can’t sleep, try: Exercise, breathing, bedtime ritual, monitor caffeine
Other Areas to Explore

- Relaxation Techniques
  - Physical relaxation – isolating specific muscle groups
  - Deep breathing
  - Visual imagery

- Mindfulness
  - Monitor your thoughts for those related to the future or the past
  - You can’t change the past, and there’s only so much you can do for the future – let those thoughts go
  - TRY TO FOCUS ON THIS VERY MOMENT – LET’S PRACTICE!!
Your Mindset Will Help Their Mindset

Strength-based approach to spotting stress
- Identify **Triggers** – what comes before stress or other challenges?
- **Prevalence** considerations – when/under what circumstances?
- Notice your **Reaction**
- **Ownership**
  - You can’t be all things to all people
  - Own what you are comfortable with owning and help others own their role

Growth Mindset – See Carol Dweck’s research – Power of “Yet”
- We are good at some things, but not others – Yet.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ)
Maintaining a Positive Mindset During Change

Most people dislike change – it activates the threat response

▶ Most in your group are dealing with change at every level of their life
  ▶ Give them the power of “Yet”

▶ Helping others cope
  ▶ We all have coping strategies – sometimes we forget that we need to adjust them over time
  ▶ What may have been adaptive earlier in life, may no longer be adaptive

▶ Building Emotional Intelligence (EQ) can help us facilitate groups
How We Can Shape EQ

- EQ consists of four skills:

<table>
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<th>Self-Awareness</th>
<th>Self-Management</th>
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<td>Social Awareness</td>
<td>Relationship Management</td>
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Self-Awareness + Self-Management = Personal Competence

Social Awareness + Relationship Management = Social Competence

Examples of Building Personal Competence

- **Self-Awareness**
  - Emotional Journal
  - Feel your emotions physically
  - Quit treating your emotions as good or bad
  - Observe the ripple effect of from your emotions

- **Self-Management**
  - Breathe right
  - Make your goals public
  - Take control of your self-talk
  - Clean up your hygiene
  - Stay synchronized
  - Learn a valuable lesson from everyone you encounter

Conversations in Our Heads

Sense the World Around You → Tell a Story → Feel → Act

This is where we can impact our stress level and emotions

Examples of Building Social Competence

- **Social Awareness**
  - Watch body language
  - Greet people by name
  - Watch EQ at the movies
  - Practice the art of listening
  - Seek the whole picture

- **Relationship Management**
  - Be open and be curious
  - Avoid giving mixed signals
  - Take feedback well
  - Build trust
  - When you care, show it

References


Additional Reading:

Additional Activities can be found at: https://www.therapistaid.com
**During Your Group**

When a critical point or challenge arises, evaluate the four criteria below, when applicable. (Note: You may not have complete information for each of these)

**Triggers** - What event caused or came directly before the success or challenge?

**Prevalence** - Does the event always lead to the success or challenge? Will this success or challenge be a lasting one?

**Reaction** - How does the group member react emotionally and/or cognitively to the success/challenge?

**Ownership** - Does the group member own the problem or blame others?

Once these have been evaluated, then you can begin to brainstorm one or more action plans with the group/team member.

**During the Intervention**

With as much of the four criteria addressed as possible, begin to action plan with the group member. Ask the group member how they'd like to proceed. (Get them involved in the action planning). If they are stuck, offer an action plan based on your own experiences or what you’re seeing and hearing from their circumstances.

Remember to:

1. Emphasize what the individual is doing well, or how they have already been successful
2. Ask *how* you can help, not *if* you can help
3. Praise their successes and normalize challenges

**Before any intervention, remind yourself**

1. Everyone has strengths and abilities
2. We all need to build upon our strengths and abilities to grow
3. Find the knowledge/skill gap – remind them that they are not the problem
4. Discover what is going well when learning and coping are taking place, so that those conditions can be recreated
Mindfulness Meditation

The goal of mindfulness meditation is simple: to pay attention to the present moment, without judgment. However, as you practice, you’ll find that this is easier said than done.

During mindfulness meditation, you will focus on your breathing as a tool to ground yourself in the present moment. It’s normal that your mind will wander. You’ll simply bring yourself back into the moment by refocusing on your breathing, again and again.

Follow the instructions below to begin practicing mindfulness meditation.

**Time & Place**

Aim to practice daily for 15-30 minutes. More frequent, consistent, and longer-term practice leads to the best results. However, some practice is better than no practice.

Find a time and place where you are unlikely to be interrupted. Silence your phone and other devices, and set a timer for your desired practice length.

**Posture**

- Sit in a chair, or on the floor with a cushion for support.
- Straighten your back, but not to the point of stiffness.
- Let your chin drop slightly, and gaze downward at a point in front of you.
- If in a chair, place the soles of your feet on the ground. If on the floor, cross your legs.
- Let your arms fall naturally to your sides, with your palms resting on your thighs.
- If your pose becomes too uncomfortable, feel free to take a break or adjust.

**Awareness of Breathing**

Because the sensations of breathing are always present, they are useful as a tool to help you focus on the present moment. Whenever you become distracted during meditation, turn your focus back to breathing.

Notice the sensation of air as it passes through your nose or mouth, the rise and fall of your belly, and the feeling of air being exhaled, back into the world. Notice the sounds that accompany each inhalation and exhalation.

**Wandering Mind**

It’s normal that your thoughts will wander during mindfulness meditation. At times, it might feel like a constant battle to maintain focus on your breathing. Don’t worry—that’s normal. Instead of struggling against your thoughts, simply notice them, without judgment. Acknowledge that your mind has wandered, and return your attention to breathing. Expect to repeat this process again and again.
What is Mindfulness?

**Mindfulness**: a state of nonjudgmental awareness of what’s happening in the present moment, including the awareness of one’s own thoughts, feelings, and senses.

🔍 Components of Mindfulness

**Awareness.** During a state of mindfulness, you will notice your thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations as they happen. The goal isn’t to clear your mind or to stop thinking—it’s to become aware of your thoughts and feelings, rather than getting lost in them.

**Acceptance.** The thoughts, feelings, and sensations that you notice should be observed in a nonjudgmental manner. For example, if you notice a feeling of nervousness, simply state to yourself: “I notice that I am feeling nervous”. There’s no need further judge or change the feeling.

❤️ Benefits of Mindfulness

- Reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Improved memory, focus, and mental processing speed
- Improved ability to adapt to stressful situations
- Greater satisfaction within relationships
- Reduced rumination (repetitively going over a thought or problem)
- Improved ability to manage emotions

כירMindfulness Practice

**Note:** Mindfulness is a state of mind, rather than a particular action or exercise. However, without practice, mindfulness is difficult to achieve. These techniques are designed to help you practice.

**Mindfulness Meditation**

Sit in a comfortable place, and begin paying attention to your breathing. Notice the physical sensation of air filling your lungs, and then slowly leaving. When your mind wanders—which it will—simply notice your thoughts, and turn your attention back to breathing.

**Mindfulness Walk**

While walking, make a point to practice mindfulness. Start by noticing how your body moves and feels with each step. Then, expand your awareness to your surroundings. What do you see? Hear? Smell? Feel? This technique can also be expanded to other daily activities.

**Body Scan**

Pay close attention to the physical sensations throughout your body. Start with your feet, and move up through your legs, groin, abdomen, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, and face. Spend anywhere from 15 seconds to 1 minute on each body part.

**Five Senses**

Make a conscious effort to notice the present moment through each of your senses.

- 5 things you see
- 4 things you feel
- 3 things you hear
- 1 thing you taste
- 1 thing you smell